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AN
ADDRESS
ON THE
GENIUS, PUBLIC LIFE,
AND
OPINIONS
OF
ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

DELIVERED AT RICHMOND, VA., MAY 9, 1856,

BY REQUEST OF THE

LADIES OF THE CENTRAL MOUNT VERNON
ASSOCIATION,

AND IN AID OF THE PURCHASE OF MOUNT VERNON.

BY

HON. FERNANDO WOOD,

MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

NEW YORK:

EVANDER CHILDS, STEAM BOOK AND JOB PRINTER,

Sun Buildings, corner Fulton and Nassau Sts.

1856.



ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

In accepting the invitation to visit Richmond and deliver an Address in aid of the high and patriotic objects of the MOUNT VERNON ASSOCIATION, I perform a most gratifying public duty. The only cloud which hovers around the effort, is the doubt in my own mind, as to my fitness and capacity for the undertaking; arising not only from the complete occupation of my time in the discharge of my official duties which has precluded the attention required for preparation,—but from the character of my previous studies, which have been more practical than literary or historical. I rely upon the liberality and universally acknowledged kindness, which so much distinguish the people of this City, for the removal of this cloud, rather than upon my own ability to dispel it in the delivery of this address.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I have chosen for my subject to-night, ALEXANDER HAMILTON—his character—his genius—his public services.—A theme which in its magnitude and interest will supply any deficiency in its discussion—a subject which, while it challenges the deepest study of the early history of this country, and calls forth and revives a recollection of the sentiments which surrounded and imbued the fathers of the Republic, will also make its application to many of the public questions of this day, and produce reflections, not at all flattering to our own boasted advancement, superior intelligence and knowledge of Government. I have selected this topic because of

its peculiar adaptation to the objects of the Mount Vernon Association. It is in keeping with its patriotic design, that in an assembly convened to aid in the purchase of MOUNT VERNON, the subject should be the private and public virtues of one who held the closest official and personal relations to WASHINGTON himself. And if the spirit of the Father of his Country is permitted to guard these efforts of the women of America, it will look down benignantly upon this attempt, feeble though it be, to do justice to the fame and memory of ALEXANDER HAMILTON. In approaching the discussion of the life and character of a truly great man, like Hamilton, the mind should become elevated and the spirit ennobled. We should view the scenes upon which he appeared, and the events in which he took part, freed from the recollection of unworthy imputations, or of the foibles incidental to our feeble nature. We should see but the public man—canvass the ability, the patriotism or the genius which marked his progress through the fitful drama of life—and in weighing the result of his exertions—the advantages derived from his services, and the evidence of disinterested devotion to his country—forget the aspersions, if any originating, it may have been in the jealousies of rivals and the interests of party. There is probably no theme of public discussion more difficult than that of the character of public men, yet living or recently deceased. There can be no literary navigation so liable to shipwreck as that which lies through the eddies and rocks and quicksands of political life ; and with this consciousness of the embarrassments which surround the topic selected by me, I proceed at once to a plain and candid statement of my own views, and for which I alone am responsible.

Hamilton was descended from an ancient and distinguished Scotch ancestry, though it has been well said he required no illustrious lineage to give renown to his memory. He was a native of Nevis, the smallest of the windward West India Islands, then, as now, under the dominion of the British government.

At the age of twelve years he was placed in a counting room, preparatory to a mercantile education. Even at this early period, his strong mind and soaring ambition had developed themselves. In a letter addressed at that time to a school-fellow then in New York, he says, "I condemn the grovelling condition of a clerk or the like, to which my fortune conducts me, and would, willingly risk my life, *but not my character, to exalt my station.* I am confident that my youth excludes me from any hopes of immediate preferment, nor do I desire it, but I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I am no philosopher, you see, and may be justly said to build castles in the air ; my folly makes me ashamed and beg you'll conceal it ; yet Neddy, we hear such schemes successful, when the projector is *constant*. I shall conclude by saying I wish there was a war." How the letter of the boy foreshadows the genius of the man. Three years afterwards he left the counting-room and was sent to New York, it having been wisely determined by his friends that such a mind should not mature bereft of cultivation. He was placed at a grammar-school in the vicinity, but soon after transferred to Kings (now Columbia) college. It was whilst a student here, that he gave forth the first scintillations of that genius, energy and courage which so signally distinguished his after life. The times and the temper of the people were auspicious for the development of great minds and lofty patriotism. New York at this period, (1772,) no recent convert to the doctrine of the capacity of the people for self-government, was agitated by the increasing oppression of the Home Government. Sixty-eight years anterior to the Declaration of Independence, she had proclaimed the principle that the rights of property were inalienable and not to be controlled by Government, except by the consent of the governed ; that the Colonies could only be taxed with their own consent ; principles that lay at the foundation of our revolutionary struggles. From these positions, so early taken, New York never wavered, maintaining them in 1756 and 1765, with

undeviating consistency, down to the American Revolution ; nor did the repeal of the Stamp Act serve to shake the constancy of her people, followed as it was by the quartering of British troops upon them. Throughout these aggressions the colony maintained her antagonism. She held firmly to the declaration of 1708, to Republican ideas. Thus the spirit of the people needed little encouragement to arouse their indignation. Indeed, the generation of 1776 in New York had inherited hostile proclivities to England, not easily subdued. It was quite prepared for rebellion before the first blow had been struck, or the boldest had conceived it prudent to resist. Such was the general tone of public opinion in the colony when Hamilton arrived. He was not long in partaking of its spirit. He acknowledged no allegiance to England. He had never put foot upon any other than American soil, or breathed any other than American air. His youthful ambition was easily fired by what was going on around him, and having become imbued with and absorbed in the great cause, he was ready to enter the contest with all the resources of his powerful, though as yet embryonic mind.

One act of perfidy and usurpation by the British Government followed another until 1774, when the whole continent of America instinctively resolved that longer forbearance would be pusillanimous. The Boston Tea party ignited the sleeping volcano. New York followed with public demonstrations, evincing an unmistakable determination for open, armed rebellion. She hesitated no longer. On the 6th of July, 1774, a public meeting was called in the city of New York, at the Liberty Pole, (before erected by the "sons of liberty") to elect by free suffrage, in defiance of ministerial authority, representatives to a Provincial Convention. This was the first truly popular election ever held in that Colony, and I believe about the first ever held on this continent entirely free in its suffrage. At this meeting Alexander Hamilton, though a boy

of seventeen, appeared as the principal orator. His biographer eloquently says of this maiden effort :

“The novelty of the attempt, his youthful countenance, his slender and diminutive form, awakened curiosity and arrested attention. Overawed by the scene before him, he at first hesitated and faltered ; but as he proceeded almost unconsciously to utter his accustomed reflections, his mind warmed with the theme, his energies were recovered, and after a discussion clear, cogent and novel, of the great principles involved in the controversy, he depicted in glowing colors the long-continued and long-endured oppression of the mother country ; he insisted on the duty of resistance, pointed to the means and certainty of success, and described the waves of rebellion sparkling with fire, and washing back on the shores of England the wreck of her power, her wealth and her glory. The breathless silence ceased as he closed, and the whispered murmur ‘It is a collegian ! it is a collegian’ was lost in loud expressions of wonder and applause at the extraordinary eloquence of the young stranger.”

From this time Hamilton’s energies were aroused. The people looked upon him as a prodigy. His presence became indispensable to every movement, and we find him engaged in eloquent addresses to the people ; in filling the columns of the only journal which could be procured to sustain the cause ; in irresistible attacks upon the measures of the ministry ; and with the organization and disciplining of troops.

But Hamilton was not content with contributions to the press, he attempted higher flights with the pen, and, in one of the most convincing and able efforts of his remarkable mind, produced an essay, which, in argumentative force and bold positions—considering the date of its production and the youth of its author—was little less than miraculous. It was in reply to a “West

Chester Farmer," who had assailed, with much severity the Continental Congress, which had just closed at Philadelphia, attacking the proceedings of that body with an ability which had made an impression on the public not at all favorable to the liberal party. Hamilton was quick to discern the effect, and within a fortnight there appeared an anonymous reply written by him with this quaint title: "A full vindication of the Measures of Congress from the calumnies of their enemies, in answer to a letter under the signature of 'aWestchester Farmer,' whereby his *sophistry* is exposed, his *carils* confuted, his *artifices* detected and his *wit* ridiculed."

This was written in 1774, and was followed up with others of yet wider scope, enlarging with almost prophetic vision, upon the present and future trade and commerce of the Colonies, if freed from the restrictions placed upon their industry. In these pamphlets it was declared that there was no resource but resistance *vi et armis*; there was no freedom except in representative government BASED UPON UNRESTRICTED SUFFRAGE; there was no form of government suited to the American colonies but that which guaranteed the enjoyment of constitutional freedom. He advocated the promotion of home manufactures by the consumption of American products; the encouragement of emigration and the enlargement of domestic commerce. In one of the most impassioned passages he says: "I say tell me not of the British Commons, lords, ministerial tools, placeman, pensioners, parasites. I scorn to let my life and property depend upon the pleasure of any of them. Give me the steady, uniform, unshaken security of constitutional freedom. Give the right of trial by a jury of my own neighbors, and to be taxed by my own representatives only. What will become of the law and courts of justice without this? The shadow may remain, but the substance will be gone. I would die to preserve the law upon a solid foundation; but take away liberty and the foundation is destroyed."

In a later production a few weeks after, he attempts a yet more comprehensive discussion of the great principles involved ; evincing a grasp of intellect and knowledge of the political and commercial resources of the country almost superhuman. In this paper he pays a high but deserved compliment to Virginia, in alluding to its reception of the first act of the Home Government to impose duties ; adding that it was to satisfy that high spirited and patriotic colony that a declaration was made under the privy seal, "that taxes ought not to be laid without the authority of the General Assembly."

These able essays made a deep impression. They became the lexicon upon which the liberalists maintained their position in discussion. The oldest and most distinguished advocates of independence sought and read them with avidity. They were the Alpha of American freedom, and the Omega of British oppression. But the wonder was, who composed them. At times they were attributed to Jay, Governor Livingston, of New Jersey, and other eminent scholars, known to be republican and far the seniors of Hamilton. The greatest surprise was manifested, when it was known that the young student of King's College was the author, who until then had been known only for his fiery eloquence. He became the lion and the leader of the Sons of Liberty. He at once placed himself in the front ranks of American patriots in New York, whilst the whole country, irrespective of parties, acknowledged the prodigious intellect of the young collegian.

The excitements which always precede revolution began now to prevail the popular mind, though the power of the ministerial party unfortunately remained intact so far as the General Assembly of the colony was concerned. By the liberal disbursement of money, honors, and commercial advantages, the home government managed to retain control of that body. This continued apparent adherence to the ministry instilled additional energy into the peo-

ple of the City of New York. They determined upon having delegates to the approaching Congress who would truly represent them. The ministry made preparations to defeat them, even at the point of the bayonet, but the people were not to be deterred by threats or overawed by the display of soldiers. As soon as the patriots assembled, it was attempted to put them down with violence—they resisted, and having collected arms, turned upon their assailants, put them to flight, and carried their ticket by a decisive vote. This was on the first of March, 1775, and was the first conflict between the patriots and the ministerial party in which a resort to arms was necessary to decide the contest, and was nearly two months in advance of the battle of Lexington.

From this day event followed event with magic rapidity. The battle of Lexington was fought—the war-cry was raised throughout the land. A noble and patriotic band had been collected as an American Congress, truly reflecting the sentiments of the country, which had been aroused to a height of indignation no longer to be suppressed. The city of New York at once assumed her true position. Her people rallied as one man in response to the noble action of her friends and neighbors of the East and South. The mob seized the keys of the Custom House ; broke open the armory, and drove a battalion of royal troops from the city, after having forcibly taken their arms from them. From her example the whole Colony became aroused and determined—favorable positions upon the Hudson were secured and occupied—alarm posts established, the counties divided into military districts and commanding officers chosen to act under the direction of provincial committees. Hamilton joined a provincial troop, which he soon commanded. The men of wealth came forward with offers of material aid, and in the absence of ready money pledged their fortunes for the payment of such sums as were borrowed to sustain the cause. Every man who could bear a musket fell into line. Hamilton, whose pen and energy had contributed more than any other in the

colony to create this enthusiasm, did not shrink from the storm when thus aroused. He had thrown himself into the front rank, but amidst the tumult maintained the coolness of a consummate leader.

Instead of the ungovernable extremes to which ordinary men of his temperament and youth would have been carried, he appeared as the conservator of the peace and the sedate reasoner. When the impulsive mob became turbulent, he was found the eloquent declaimer against violence to property or life. It was in one of these excitements that he saved the life of his Professor, Dr. Cooper, when the exasperated crowd had surrounded the college, to make the old loyalist suffer for his principles. This was effected by holding them in abeyance at the door to listen to his sage counsels, until the old gentleman had an opportunity to escape on board of a ship in the harbor. Upon another occasion, when the rage of the people, now forced up to its highest pitch, burst forth in an attempt to destroy the establishment of Rivington, the Tory printer, he appeared upon the ground, and with the soft persuasive oratory (for which in after life he was so much distinguished, and, indeed, in which at the New York bar he had no compeer,) he strove to subdue their passions by eloquent appeals for the liberty of the press. Nor was it alone in the capacity of author, speaker, and counsellor, that Hamilton, even at this age, appeared. Astounding indeed must it seem to us, that a youth of seventeen should combine the rare qualities of excelling in the discussion of abstruse questions of philosophy and of government—the capacity to enforce with a pen of almost unequalled power the great truths of civil and religious liberty, with the yet more effective gift of extemporaneous eloquence, at once ready, fluent, didactic, and convincing; a knowledge of military tactics, a love for the profession of the soldier, and a devotion to military life truly marvelous; thus presenting in the same person the possession of the three great mental energies by

which thrones have been destroyed, revolutions achieved and States established. He was indeed the sage, the statesman, and the soldier, whilst yet the humble college boy! I challenge history for a parallel!

We now approach the most interesting period in the youthful career of this remarkable man, as it was the most critical in the history of "the times which tried men's souls." The war had in reality commenced. Washington had been chosen Commander-in-chief. General Lee had been deputed as the commanding officer in New York, the devotion of whose people continued and is illustrated in the fact, that the proprietors of the largest estates authorized him to lay the city in ashes, if by so doing the cause of the Revolution would be advanced. Hamilton had applied himself with great assiduity to the knowledge required for military life, and was already proficient. He had organized and equipped a military company from the slender resources of his own limited allowance for college education, and was appointed on the 14th of March, 1776, its captain, by the Convention of the Colony. He was in command of this company during the movements which preceded the Declaration of Independence, and was an officer of recognized accomplishments even before Washington established his headquarters in New York. His immediate introduction to the regular army is well told by Irving, who relates that one day as General Green was passing through the fields now known as the Park, in which the City Hall stands, his attention was called to the manoeuvres of a provincial artillery company, at whose head appeared a mere youth, but whose skill was so remarkable, that it induced the General to make his acquaintance and to invite him to his quarters. This youth I need not say was Hamilton, and this accident the commencement of his connection with the Revolutionary army. He soon joined the regular forces for active service as Captain Hamilton; was at the battle of Long Island, and brought up the retreat at the head of his little

company with only the loss of his baggage and a field piece. It was, however, on the heights of Harlem, where Hamilton was engaged in throwing up works of defence, that he first attracted the notice of Washington, whose experienced eye was not long in discerning the merits of the young officer. He was invited by the great commander to his tent, where was laid the foundation of the future confidence and affection which connected these great men together during the remainder of their lives, and will unite their names so long as American history shall live. The campaign which succeeded, and which was probably the most severe of the whole Revolution, found Hamilton ever equal to the most hazardous and trying duty, always maintaining himself with the same coolness, courage, and address.

On the 1st of March, 1777, he was invited by General Washington into his military family as aid-de-camp, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, which he accepted with reluctance, preferring to await the certain promotion which he well knew his success in the line of the army would command. He retained this position throughout the most trying periods of the war, serving his chief with a devotion and constancy that have never been surpassed. It is well known that many of the dispatches and official papers, which bore the signature of Washington during this relation, were prepared by Hamilton. In the difficulty with General Gates, growing out of the correspondence of that officer with General Conway, Hamilton rendered essential aid, and in the subsequent attempts of *cabals* to supplant the Commander-in-chief, he served him with fidelity and skill; and not only Hamilton, but the whole Colony of New York, sustained him also, when his good name was thus assailed. His biographer says: "Whilst Pennsylvania hesitated to continue her confidence in him, and the votes of Maryland, North Carolina, and Georgia were divided in their support—his native Virginia misrepresented—the whole of Maryland marshalled under adverse leaders, New York,

though her metropolis and her mountain passes on the Hudson were in the hands of an enemy—her temporary seat of government in ashes—though just relieved from subjugation by the capitulation of Burgoyne—thus dismembered and dislocated, maintained all her constancy and all her firmness.”

In the many dreary scenes, and gloomy events of the of '78, '79, and '80, Hamilton maintained his constant fidelity to his commander. If his loyalty to the glorious cause in which he had been engaged had not been enough to wed him to the head of the army, to whose person he held such near official relations, admiration for the character of Washington would of itself sufficed. He loved his commander because he knew him well; he had drank from the fountain of his calm wisdom; he had been a spectator of his courage in the trying conflicts of the battle field; he had heard from his lips in the councils of war the sage conclusions of a great mind; he knew his entire personal disinterestedness and stoical integrity; and, more than all, deeply sympathized with him in the holy purpose of freeing his country from foreign misrule and oppression. Washington reciprocated the attachment of Hamilton. It is well ascertained that no man was held by Washington in higher esteem. His discernment enabled him quickly to observe the comprehensive intellect of Hamilton. The proofs which the youth had given of attachment to the liberal party, even before those who afterwards attained prominence in it had decided which side to choose, had not escaped him; and when to these were added fidelity as his aid, coolness and skill as a strategist, ripe and finished scholarship, the accomplishments of the diplomatist and the statesman, it was impossible that a man with such a head and such a heart as Washington, should not become alike the counsellor, the friend and the father of one possessing so many attributes by which to win the affection and applause of the world. And yet these remarkable men presented striking contrasts. Hamilton, in stature almost lilliputian, was the child of

genius—quick, vivacious, eloquent, and of extraordinary versatility and scope of intellect; acquiring knowledge without apparent study or effort, of genial social qualities, fond of good cheer, and not insensible to the soft repose of Cupid's couch. Beyond the ordinary stature, Washington towered above most men in figure as well as in grandeur of bearing and solemnity of character. He had not what the world calls genius, but he had the rare, sure quality of a vigorous, well balanced intellect, known as common sense. His mind was as massive as his person, and as firm upon its purpose as are the mighty hills upon their base. In the science of war he had no equal—either upon this Continent or in Europe; as a sagacious and far seeing statesman he was no less pre-eminent. He was the impersonation of his country's hopes, and his country's nationality, and as such, the living representative of the principle of human liberty throughout the world.

But time changed the official relations of Washington and Hamilton. Hamilton resigned his position of aid-de-camp on the 16th of February, 1781, under circumstances at the time painful to each, and which, as developing their personal characteristics, I will relate. Hamilton had been sent for by Washington, no doubt in haste, on business of a pressing nature, and was on his way up stairs to the General, when met by the Marquis de Lafayette, with whom he was a favorite, who detained him in conversation. The General deemed this delay disrespectful, and so told the aid upon his arrival. To this Hamilton replied, no doubt, quickly, "that he was not conscious of it but since you have thought necessary to tell me so, we part." "Very well, sir, if it be your choice," was the rejoinder of Washington, and their official relations, as then existing, ceased for ever. The next day an effort was made by Washington to induce Hamilton to return to his post.

Col. Tilghman, who was deputed for this purpose, assured Hamilton, in the General's name, that he retained the utmost confi-

dence in his integrity, ability and usefulness ; but Hamilton being desirous of an opportunity to distinguish himself in some position of command, was averse to resume a place presenting no opening for advancement, and so restricted in its chance for military distinction. Not the slightest alteration, however, was made by the separation in the kind personal relations existing between them. The same affection and mutual esteem, remained through life. Hamilton was called in at the councils of war, and as will be seen in the progress of this hurried sketch, enjoyed the continued confidence of the General. Being now at liberty, he resolved to obtain, if possible, a command in the army, equal to the services he had rendered. An application was made, which, after some delay, was successful and which subsequently gave him the opportunity for distinction, which he knew himself so well able to win. He joined the army in the fall of the same year, and was placed in charge of important posts, preparatory to the siege of Yorktown. He was invited by Washington to be present at the councils that decided upon this important movement against Cornwallis. He was placed in command of a corps of light infantry attached to the division of Lafayette, in that splendid achievement of the American arms. I need not detain you with the details of that, the most important as it was the last of the revolutionary engagements. It occurred at your very doors, and must be familiar to every school boy in your midst. But the gallant part which my hero acted upon the occasion, may not be so well remembered, nor need we be surprised if it were altogether forgotten in the recollection of others, higher in position, and more prominently identified at the time with the result.

In this battle Hamilton was, by his own urgent solicitation, placed in command of infantry which were to make a charge at the point of the bayonet upon one of the principal redoubts of the enemy—to be carried only in the face of a most destructive fire. He led in person this perilous enterprize, and rushing forward in

advance of all others, ascended the abatis, stood for a moment upon the parapet with three of his soldiers, beckoned the others to follow, and then sprang into the ditch—Major Fish, the father of one of New-York's present Senators in Congress followed. Animated by the heroic conduct of Hamilton and Fish, the infantry pressed on with muskets, unloaded, and fixed bayonets; they soon reached the counterscarp under a heavy and constant fire from the redoubt, and surmounting the abatis, ditch, and palisades, mounted the parapet and leaped into the work. Hamilton in the surrounding smoke was for a moment lost sight of, and it was feared he had fallen, but he soon re-appeared, and formed the troops in the redoubt, which soon surrendered. This was one of the most splendid achievements of the revolution; not only in its intrepidity and success, but in the discipline and celerity of the movements which accomplished it. In nine minutes from the passing of the abatis, without the firing of a gun, the surprise and capture were perfected. "Few cases" said Washington, "have established greater proof of intrepidity, coolness and firmness, than was shown on this occasion." This feat virtually decided the battle of Yorktown! and the battle of Yorktown decided the Revolution. Cornwallis never rallied or succeeded in regaining to the least extent the ground thus lost. Two days afterwards he made propositions to surrender, which were not assented to by Washington until Hamilton was consulted as to the terms.

This was Hamilton's last military service as it was Washington's. There being no necessity for further action in the field, he withdrew to the bosom of his young family, and to the pursuit of intellectual culture and professional life. He now determined upon entering a new career at the bar, but the hold he had already obtained upon the affections of the people, would not permit this withdrawal from their service. He was elected before the expiration of the same year a Delegate to Congress—the somewhat unpopular

Congress of 1782. In this Assembly, as in all in which he ever held a seat, he soon became a leading spirit. This was indeed a singular Congress. Not sharing the pervading spirit of the American people, it appeared to be lukewarm, and indifferent. If there ever was a political body requiring stimulus, it was this. The delegates appeared to be but the representatives of a heterogeneous oligarchy. Without energy themselves, or moral power before the country, they were unable to enforce their own recommendations and resolutions. In this extremity all eyes were turned upon Hamilton. They recognized in him the only man among them, with sufficient capacity and influence to save the country from subsiding into a condition, worse than that from which it had just extricated itself. He was selected to prepare an address to the several State Conventions, recommending a general convention, for the purpose of taking the state of the Country into consideration, and for the establishment of a constitutional Government. From this action resulted the meeting at Annapolis, five years after—which subsequently led to the convention of Philadelphia, in 1787, from which emanated the glorious fabric now universally recognized (except it be by a few abolition madmen) as the Charter by which we have maintained our liberties and preserved our Union.

As to the prominence of Hamilton's position in the Convention of Philadelphia, and the signal aid he rendered in reaching a happy and harmonious conclusion, there is no diversity of opinion; but as to the doctrines of government he advocated therein, and as to the genuine republicanism of his theories, there is a difference of opinion entertained, which in my judgment is entirely unjust to his patriotic character, and services. It is said he advocated Monarchical doctrines, and declared sentiments directly antagonistic to the principles upon which the present Constitution was established. I stand here to deny these positions,

and to assert, that so far from being an enemy to our present system, he was the first man who proposed and advocated the general form of government which was adopted by that Convention, many years before the idea of a general confederated Government like this was dreamt of in the philosophy of the most utopian enthusiast. In his celebrated letter to James Duane, President of Congress, written in 1780, whilst yet but 23, he urged its leading principles, recommending and depicting in almost prophetic terms the necessity of a political compact, essentially the basis of our present constitution.—In that letter he also displayed, with a master-hand, the utter insufficiency of the feeble government then existing, and the substitute in detail, with which he proposed to replace it. Here was proposed the first idea of a departmental form of government. This, however, had been preceded by an equally remarkable production.—I mean his letter to Robert Morris, in which the same declarations were made, and urged with a power never excelled. He saw at the outset that the articles of confederation, bound the Colonies, but with a rope of sand. In this letter, written in 1779, he says, “I wish to see a convention of all the States, with full power to alter and annul, finally and irrevocably, the present futile and senseless confederation.”—His celebrated Resolutions of 1783, took the same ground.

It is not my purpose, nor is it necessary in an address of this character to go into the details of the proceedings of the convention which framed the Constitution. I will not weary you by following the reported proceedings, even meagre as they are, which inform us of the several projects and debates thereon. Suffice it to say, no full reports, such as we now have of the proceedings of legislative bodies, were made by this, the most important of any gathering of men, whether considered with reference to the intellect or patriotism of the delegates themselves, or the momentous questions presented for their deliberations. We should gather these from the results rather than from the skeleton reports

existing. Of Hamilton's efforts in that Convention we know but little. These may be inferred better from what he had spoken and written anterior, and from what we know of his opinions subsequent to this convention, than from the reported debates. There can be no doubt, however, that he advocated a solid government, to be formed upon some principle of cohesion that would be sufficiently strong in its general or federal functions to protect the nationality of the whole, but I presume the strongest opponents of Hamilton's opinions will not deny that this solidity would have furnished a stable, conservative and durable system, and that it is to his exertions that we are mainly indebted for these elements in our present constitution. Nor will they deny that much upon which we now rely to maintain domestic peace and continued union, was incorporated at his instance, and yielded as a compromise by which to satisfy a yet stronger government, urged, it is true, by him.

Before considering the precise attitude assumed by Hamilton in the Convention, we should remember that it was the habit of his mind, to present every question in a practical manner. He was, next to Washington, the most practical man of the Revolution. It was his custom in the discussion of principles to propose and present propositions to be made the basis of argument and discussion, that the right, the good and the true could be sooner elicited. By reference to the debates it will be seen that the various suggestions made were mostly abstract and theoretical. Hamilton prepared and presented a scheme of a constitution—a practical idea and substance, placing before the Convention shape and form and feature, from which might be created the fabric of an organic law. This plan, which was presented in his celebrated speech of 18th of June, was produced not so much as a declaration of his own tenets and principles, as a rough mass from which the artisans of the Convention were to chisel and mould the perfect statue. He quarried the unhewn stone, and presented it to the master architects, thus furnishing the

basis and substance of the materials from which to construct the fabric. It is not a violent presumption to say that the introduction of his plan into the Convention was intended to define certain forms, for the proper distribution of the functions of government, rather than the declarations of his own settled and determined judgment as to the government itself, or, as well hinted by Morris, "his speculative opinions, which should not be treated as deliberative designs." It has been my good fortune to become the possessor of a fac-simile copy of the original draft of a Constitution introduced into the Convention by Hamilton, with all its original erasures, interlineations and alterations. Here it is, free to the examination of any who doubt the correctness of the reference which it is my intention to make to its provisions. By it we may discover—admitting that it truly reflected his convictions—what really were his theories and principles. That it does propose a strong National Government cannot be denied—to be sovereign in its sphere as such—but it was to emanate directly from the people, and in that respect not to derogate from the domestic or local rights of the Colonies or States themselves, so far as was consistent with the necessities of a central power sufficiently strong for efficient action. It made the first grand initiatory effort to establish *universal suffrage*; and this practical and legitimate ingredient of popular representative government (a controlling influence from the people) it was supposed would insure a more intelligent and virtuous administration. In it the spirit of democracy and the spirit of conservatism were closely blended and happily balanced. It had the merit of directness and explicitness of statement, leaving nothing to inference, which in constitutions are injurious and hazardous. The democratic principle was extended to the fullest limit of universal suffrage; the members of the lower House of Congress to be elected only for one year, and by an entirely free and independent vote; whilst the members of the upper house were also to be elected by popular suffrage, though for a term of good behavior. His Chief Executive was

also to be elected directly by the people. The entire plan was based on the hypothesis of establishing a national government removed from the short-sighted jealousies and influences of local and partisan powers. The incongruity and weakness of the confederation represented by the trammelled delegates of State sovereignties, had been so effectually proven, that it had become apparent to the patriot and the statesman, that a *radical* change was necessary.

It is true he proposed for his President a tenure of office out of all proportion with our ideas of democratic principles, but we must remember that he was pursuing the great thought of removing that high place from the reach of all influences of a partisan, intriguing or corrupt character ; that every motive for the improper use of its patronage should be obviated. Without wishing to be understood as expressing any opinion, as to what should be the proper period for which it would have been best to fix the Presidential term, I am prepared to say, that the term now fixed is too short. It is quite certain that great difference of opinion has always existed as to tenure of office under our government, whether by executive or judicial officers. The continual agitation of the whole country by frequent elections, and the strong inducements offered to incumbents to exercise the power inherent in the office for its continuance in their own hands, is as mischievous in its effects, as it is in my judgment detrimental to the welfare of the country.

Hamilton's Executive was subject to the impeachment of the lower house, which was invested with power over him of the highest and most responsible order. When impeached he was suspended from the exercise of his ministerial duties. The impeachment was to be tried by the judiciary—a majority of whom were to consist of the Chief Justices of the several States; thus constituting a Court removed from all federal or political bias. It is by no

means certain that, if the project of Hamilton had been a little closer followed in some of these principles, the administration of the general Government would not have been less liable than it now is, to the direct and indirect influence of sectional prejudice, its consequent embarrassments and evil results.

It is not too much to assume that in this responsibility of the Executive to the people, through their annually elected representatives, there would have existed a responsible government, substantially dependent for its permanency and its success, on the approval of public sentiment. In this case we should rarely see a cabinet of ministers holding office and approving measures in violation of the national feeling, its will and its interests.

In our system of government in which laws are made by the legislative power, and in which it is the peculiar function of the executive authority to administer them, laws enacted by a legislature chosen upon the basis of universal suffrage, must be regarded as expressing the popular will. In this sense, a law is the embodiment in a material form, of the opinions of the majority, prescribing a rule of action to be obeyed in the commonwealth. The Chief Magistrate therefore, in executing these laws only enforces the will of the people, constitutionally ascertained. It follows then that a concentration of power in the executive department of a Republican government, sufficient to execute every law of the land, is not only in no respect inconsistent with the Democratic theory of government, but is in perfect harmony with it. A strong executive is a logical and necessary deduction from the Democratic theory, indispensable to its just and complete development, since the executive in causing the laws to be obeyed, is himself the agent and representative of the people, chosen to execute the mandate of the majority.

Thus it will be seen, that in the strong Executive advocated by Hamilton, associated as it was to be with free suffrage in the selec-

tion of the Representative, the wishes of the people in the administration of the government would have been secured.

Nearly all of the conservative elements and many of the most liberal of our present constitution are to be found in Hamilton's plan. The present limitations to the powers of Congress were mostly taken from it *verbatim*. He was the first to present to the Convention the suggestion that Congress should have no power to pass *ex-post facto* laws, bills of attainder, or give titles of nobility, and that persons holding office could receive no presents, title or office from any foreign power or state. He also proposed that there should be no religious tests, and that Church and State should never be united under this government—restrictions which were not incorporated until the constitution was amended, two years afterwards. It is also in his constitution that we find (article ix. sec. 5,) this remarkable provision, which has been the great safeguard of the rights of the States under the present constitution. "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to the rights, privileges and immunities of citizens in every other State, and full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts, records and judicial proceedings of another." His Senators were to be chosen by electors, selected by the people for that purpose, and not by the Legislature, as finally adopted. We may differ as to which is the better mode, but there can be no difference of opinion as to which is the most consistent with the spirit of our institutions. Nor were his limitations to the powers reserved by the States so many or so stringent as the requirements in the present Constitution.

Throughout the whole was displayed a strong bias in favor of the elementary principles of free elections—the conservative principle which alone has kept us so long together. Again—and which to Virginia and other Southern States, is a matter of no small moment—his plan recognized the right to slave property, and

its correspondent representative right is fully maintained by him in the power granted to Congress to levy taxes on the basis of three-fifths population. In the recognition of this fundamental principle of taxation, were established the nature and character of the representative apportionment, and it is worth remembering just now, that not only did the Convention adopt his proposition in this respect, but that it was also assented to and approved of by all the States in the Union, in their acceptance and ratification of the national compact.

I repeat, therefore, that he was, in the main, the father of the leading principles of the present Constitution, and in this opinion I but assert what has before been stated by Gouverneur Morris and men equally eminent among his contemporaries.

Nor does his claim to the possession of liberal principles rest alone upon his early writings from which I have quoted, nor upon his propositions in this Convention. At an earlier day he proposed in the old confederation, that their deliberations should be with open door, and he was always the defender of the liberty of the press. During the war of the Revolution, and again in the celebrated case of *Croswell*, he was the first to assert that, in a publication from a rightful motive, the truth might be given in justification. This was at a time when the judiciary of England was earnestly engaged in settling the law of libel, and on the receipt of his argument in this case, and the subsequent action in the Legislature of New York, his definition was adopted almost verbatim; and this has been the law ever since, both in England and America.

But whatever may have been his peculiar theories, no man, it will not be denied, evinced more energy and ability in behalf of the adoption of the Constitution. It was mainly owing to his exertions, in conjunction with other master-spirits of Virginia and New York that we are indebted for its confirmation by the States. It is true he saw objections to portions of it at the time of its adoption—so

did Virginia see objections—yet, when the alternative presented itself of this Constitution or none, he, like your own noble and patriotic commonwealth, gave up opposition and rallied for its defence.

New York was strongly adverse. She would not have approved the Constitution in the form in which it came from the Convention, but for Hamilton; and who can say that that defection would not have defeated it altogether. He returned home, became a member of the State Convention to consider the propriety of ratifying it, and by his eloquence and commanding ability, succeeded in securing for it the sanction of that body. About the same time, in conjunction with Madison and Jay, he commenced those masterly contributions to the “Federalist,” which, I believe, it is now universally conceded, were more potent in subduing the opposition to the Constitution throughout the country, by convincing the people of its beneficence and wisdom, than any other means taken to accomplish that vital necessity, upon which depended the continuance of the federal union. No man—and I say it with proper reverence for the distinguished services of others—contributed more efficient aid. What if he did propose a constitution possessing features hostile to the short term principle, and which, in this respect, was repugnant to our now well settled theories of democratic republicanism? Several patriotic States put forward, through their delegates to that body, projects equally objectionable. In contemplating the public life and genius of such a man as Hamilton, with the revival of the recollection of his many glorious deeds upon the field as well as of the part he took in these momentous deliberations, we should look upon any propositions he may have made, let their details have been what they may, as subjects of opinion about which, at that time, men may have honestly differed, without detracting at all from their patriotism. It must not be forgotten that the ruling idea in that body was,

perhaps too much "What do the people wish—what will the people like," and perhaps too little what will make the most perfect form of government. It is quite evident, in looking at their proceedings in the best possible light, that the master minds and most devoted men of that body, each gave up something of his own convictions to satisfy the public mind and to form a more perfect union, lest the federative league then existing should crumble into pieces, and the States resolve themselves altogether into their former independent, unprotected, and isolated condition. Hamilton, however, never sought a compromise between his public duty and his love of popularity.

On the accession of Washington to the Presidency, Hamilton was invited to take charge of the Fiscal Department of the Government, as Secretary of the Treasury. In the fulfilment of this arduous duty it became necessary for him, not only to create and organize that important branch, but to devise and put in motion a system of Government finances and revenues equal to the redemption of the country from its prostrate condition. This he accomplished, and the same system, after a lapse of sixty years, stands unaltered and unamended as a monument of his immense financial and executive skill. He found the national Treasury almost hopelessly bankrupt, and the honor and credit of the country almost entirely destroyed. No man but Hamilton could have been equal to the herculean undertaking of resuscitating a treasury in so pitiable a condition of exhaustion and embarrassment, and bringing order, system, and solvency out of its troubled chaos. Well was it said by Webster, in his celebrated eulogy of Hamilton, that "He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of the public credit, and it sprung upon its feet. The fabled bird of Minerva from the brain of Jove was hardly more perfect than the financial system of the United States, as it burst forth from the conceptions of Alexander Hamilton."

I regret that the limits of this discourse will not permit a full reference to this part of his public life. Its importance to the country, as well as the wide space it necessarily fills in his public career, demand for it a larger share of attention than my time or your patience will allow. To those who are familiar with the history of Hamilton's financial administration, nothing can be more satisfactory than that, in the honest provision which was made to secure and to pay the debts of the Revolution, he established for the nation a high and honorable character—that of fidelity in the discharge of its obligations. It was this high toned integrity, so like Hamilton in all his private duties, that at once placed this country, scarcely emerged from the chaos of the Revolution, in a position to command the confidence of European capitalists. Large amounts of foreign capital were at once invested in our securities, and that which we most required to develop the agricultural, commercial, and industrial resources was immediately furnished. If this course had not been pursued, the debts would have remained to the disgrace of our national honor, and to the discredit of our financial integrity. We should have suffered in every element of prosperity, and who can say that the result might not have so paralyzed the country, as to leave it a victim to internal exhaustion and anarchy. At this critical period, when we had scarcely emerged from the Revolution, and were still suffering from its effects, and when our Government had not as yet risen to the dignity of an experiment, and when a large State party still clung to the hope that we would again relapse into British dependence, it required no ordinary mind to conduct the monetary affairs of the Republic. However great we have shown Hamilton in the field and in the solemn and momentous deliberations of the Constitutional Convention, he was, in my opinion, still greater as he steered the national bark through the storms of this troubled and eventful epoch of its opening history. The slightest error would have caused irretrievable ruin. The least hesitancy or want of con-

fidence or presence of mind in the pilot would have wrecked the little craft. The war had left the country a barren waste, without money or credit, and almost without commerce or agriculture. So depleted was the public Treasury, that the officers of the Government, including the members of Congress, at the commencement of Washington's administration, went home unpaid. And yet public and private demands were finally met and provided for, and his system, as originally devised, was put into successful motion, as perfect and harmonious as it came from his giant intellect. Nor was the management of the Executive Department, of which he was the head, the only duty which it became necessary for him to perform in the accomplishment of this important object. He drew all the revenue bills for Congress, and counselled, supervised, and directed their passage through both Houses. Fisher Ames says of him in reference to the revenue reports before Congress, prepared in all cases by Hamilton, that "there is not to be found a single clause that savors of despotic power; not one that the strongest champion of law and liberty would on that ground hesitate to approve and adopt."

Nor was it alone in the Fiscal Department of Washington's administration that the mind and energies of Hamilton were exercised. He was the leading spirit in every other, giving tone and form to its foreign as well as its domestic policy. His enemies have made him responsible for its mistakes, and I am not prepared to deny their right to do so—though none but those who are cognizant of the secret consultations of those who control the policy of Government, can know who of its members are chargeable with its errors. In the withdrawal of Washington from the Presidency, the country lost the services of Hamilton. After leaving the Treasury he retired to New York, and resumed the practice of the law, and though still deeply solicitous for the right administration of public affairs, and as ever watchful of the interests of his country, he refused to occupy any official position. On the threatened rup-

ture with France, during the administration of the elder Adams, he offered his military services, and if a war had grown out of that difficulty, he would have held the second position to Washington in the command of the army. Washington refused to accept that post, when offered to him by Adams, upon any other condition. No higher endorsement of the military talents of Hamilton need be sought for—Washington's confidence in him had grown with his years, and had ripened with his age. He had tried his abilities in the cabinet and tested his courage and conduct in war, and in the evening of life, when again invited to enter the tented field, and to hear the clang of arms, he insisted on the co-operation of his trusted associate and friend. President Adams attempted to resist this wish of Washington to place Hamilton second in command, but the alternative was presented by Washington of his own declination or Hamilton's promotion.

The events which succeeded, with which he was connected, were few and without public interest, and I need not refer to them. Nor is it necessary to allude to the distracted condition of the politics of the Country, which led to that acrimonious controversy existing anterior to and during the administration of Mr. Jefferson. In the State of New-York these contests were bitter, unrelenting and personal. In that State Hamilton's position was too high, and the estimation in which he was held by his fellow citizens too favorable, for him to escape the shafts of enemies and the designs of the envious and aspiring. The more able and brilliant a public man the more violent and unscrupulous is the opposition! He was singled out as "the bright and shining light," which it was necessary to extinguish before the lesser luminaries could be discerned and appreciated. Every unpopular position of Washington's administration, and every word and act, whether public or private, which owed its paternity to him, were invoked, like Banquo's ghost to affright the ignorant or timid. It was

with this spirit, that sentiments he never uttered were attributed to him—acts he never committed were charged upon him, and motives he never entertained were imputed to him. He became the impersonation of the sinking fortunes of an expiring party—a party which like an unfortunate man, but encounters renewed hostility as it falls still lower in the popular esteem. He became the victim of a plot—a plot to extinguish forever the brilliant glory which surrounded the brow of New-York's favorite son.

I do not intend to detain you with a recapitulation of the incidents which immediately preceded the death of Hamilton. These must be familiar to every person in an audience so intelligent as this. You all know the character of Burr, his antagonist in that melancholy tragedy—his profligate private life, and his unprincipled public career. Do not let us contrast the characters of two such men as Hamilton and Burr. I shall not attempt it; nor is it my wish to make allusions to the dark spots in the life of any man. So far, however, as is necessary to the completion of the picture I have undertaken to portray, it becomes my duty in maintaining the truth of history, to speak out freely and frankly of one so intimately associated with the last sad days of Hamilton. Burr had long been jealous of the overshadowing position of Hamilton, whilst Hamilton had long known and detested the vices and principles, public and private, of Burr. Against the aspirations of the latter for the Presidency, Hamilton threw himself in opposition with all his resources, not so much that the success of Burr would have been a triumph of the adverse party, as from a firm conviction upon the part of Hamilton, that the accession of such a man to the Presidency would have been a great public calamity from which the Republic could never recover. It was in this contest that he openly and boldly advocated the selection of Jefferson for President. I know it is the general belief that the feeling between these great men was of a character which always placed Hamilton in an attitude of opposition to Jefferson. This is not the case; for

though from the necessities of their positions as leaders of antagonistical political parties, these two controlling intellects of our Revolutionary period were often in conflict, they nevertheless entertained the highest respect for each other's talents and devotion to the true interests of the country. On the 16th December, 1800, Hamilton writes to Woleott, discussing the probability of Burr's having strength in the House of Representatives for the Presidency, that "upon every virtuous and prudent consideration, Jefferson is to be preferred."

The result is known. Jefferson was elected, and the intellect and high toned patriotism he evinced, fully justified the preference of Hamilton. I would fain stop here to pay a tribute of reverence and respect to the memory of the father and founder of the democratic party, of which I am an humble member; but agreeable as such an episode might be to a Virginian audience, and pleasing as the theme would be to my own feelings, I must omit it in the necessity which forces me to a rapid conclusion of this diffuse and imperfect performance. The defeat of Burr but added fuel to the flame which was burning in his breast; he had, however, obtained the second place, and, in the power of that position, made every effort to crush out Hamilton's influence in New York. For the succeeding two or three years New York politics were agitated and disturbed by the efforts of Burr to retain by intrigue his waning power. As is well known, his machinations in Congress were directed against Jefferson, whilst in New York and in the North they were equally devoted to Hamilton. In both he was foiled, and soon stood before the country—prostrate and deserted as a public man. In February, 1804, Jefferson was unanimously re-nominated by the Democratic, or, as was then called, Republican members of Congress as a candidate for re-election; for Burr there was no support, not even one vote for the Vice-Presidency, which he then held. Spurned from the National Capital, he turned his aspirations to New York, and became a can-

didate for the less conspicuous position of Governor of that State. But even here the Republican party, to which he had been attached, repudiated him, nominating first Lansing and then Lewis in preference. Thus all chance for even this position appeared to be lost. He was, however, never without resources, for with all his faults of character, he was really an able man, and a bold and ingenious leader. He caused himself to be nominated as an independent candidate for Governor, with the hope that the Federalists, much distracted and broken down, would be induced to give their support. It was now that Hamilton assumed a still more open attitude of hostility, and it was through his exertions, and the general distrust of the people, that Burr came out of the canvass shamefully defeated and for ever prostrated. Nothing was now left to him but revenge, that last resort of an utterly disgraced and ruined man. He was not long in finding pretexts upon which to demand an explanation of Hamilton. It appears that whilst at Albany the winter preceding, during the efforts of Burr to procure the support of the Federal party for Governor, Hamilton had, in conversation with a Dr. Cooper, expressed himself freely of Burr's political character. Cooper, in a publication for the newspapers, made some allusions to this conversation with Hamilton, and used the word "despicable" as one spoken of Burr by Hamilton at the interview referred to. Burr made this statement of Cooper's the basis of a demand upon Hamilton for explanation. Several letters passed between the parties before friends were called in, though it was apparent that Burr was acting from the commencement in concert with others. The requirements of Burr were unreasonable, and evinced from the opening of the correspondence a determination to force Hamilton into a dishonorable disavowal of every expression or insinuation he had at any time, during a political controversy of twenty years, made against the conduct and character of Burr, or else pay the forfeit of his life. Hamilton was not long in discovering the

murderous intent of his desperate antagonist, and in one of his replies delicately but pointedly referred to it. This allusion was made an additional ground of complaint by Burr, who, refusing to listen to any steps towards compromise and honorable adjustment, forced on the difficulty to a bloody result. The correspondence opened on the 18th June, 1804, and was continued by the principals and their immediate friends in the duel, until the 27th, when it ceased with an understanding that they were to fight. Hamilton suggested that as the Circuit Court was then in session, in which he had to appear as Counsel in several important suits, the meeting should be postponed till after the adjournment, that the interests of those who had intrusted to him the charge of their cases should not suffer by any fatal result to himself. The seconds agreed to this delay, and the meeting was postponed till July.

On Friday, the 6th July, Mr. Pendleton, the friend of Hamilton, informed Mr. Van Ness, the friend of Burr, that his principal would be ready at any time after the Sunday following. On Monday the 9th, the particulars were arranged, and on Wednesday the 11th, at day light in the morning, the parties crossed the Hudson River to Weehawken, on the New Jersey Shore, opposite to New-York. The incidents upon the ground were not marked by unusual circumstances. It is conceded that both parties bore themselves with coolness and courage. Burr fired first, and his shot took effect upon the right side of Hamilton, who was mortally wounded before his own pistol had been raised from his side. He lingered in anguish until two o'clock the next day, enduring more, it is supposed, from the consciousness of the affliction he had brought upon his family and his friends, than from bodily pain. He died amidst the heart-rending tears of a devoted wife and seven young and helpless children. The next day a Coroner's jury held an Inquest upon his body, which, after a lengthy examination, returned a verdict of willful murder against Aaron Burr,

Vice-President of the United States. The following is a verbatim copy of the original Inquisition in my possession :

City and County of New York, ss :

An Inquisition, Indented, taken for the People of the State of New York, at the Third Ward of the City of New York in the County of New York, the 13th day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and four, and continued by adjournment until the second day of August, in the year aforesaid, before me, John Burger, Coroner, for the said City and County of New York, on view of the body of Alexander Hamilton, then and there to wit, on the said thirteenth day of July in the year last aforesaid at the Ward, City and County aforesaid, lying dead, upon the oath of Alexander Anderson, George Minuse, John A. Hardenbrook, Peter Bonnett, Elam Williams, John Coffin, John Mildeberger, David A. Brower, David Lydig, Abraham Bloodgood, James Cummings, Amos Curtis, Isaac Burr, Benjamin Strong, and John D. Miller, good and lawful men of the said City and County of New York, duly chosen, and who being then and there duly sworn and charged to enquire for the people of the State of New York, when, where, how and by what means the said Alexander Hamilton came to his death, do upon their oaths say, that Aaron Burr, late of the Eighth Ward of said City in the said County, Esquire, and Vice-President of the United States, not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil, on the eleventh day of July in the year last aforesaid, with force and arms, in the County of Bergen and State of New Jersey, in and upon the said Alexander Hamilton in the peace of God and of the people of the said State of New Jersey then and there being, feloniously, wilfully, and of his malice aforethought, did make an assault, and that the said Aaron Burr, a certain pistol of the value of one dollar, charged and loaded with gun powder, and a leaden bullet, which he, the said Aaron Burr, then and there had, and held in his right hand, to, at and against the right side of the belly of the said Alexander Hamilton, did then and there shoot off and discharge, by means whereof he the said Aaron Burr, feloniously, wilfully and of his malice aforethought, did then and there give unto him the said Alexander Hamilton, with the leaden bullet aforesaid, so as aforesaid shot off and discharge out of the pistol aforesaid by the force of the gun powder aforesaid upon the right side of the belly of him the said Alexander Hamilton, a little above the hip, one mortal wound, penetrating the belly of him the said Alexander Hamilton of which said mortal wound, he the said Alexander Hamilton, from the said Eleventh day of July, in the year aforesaid, until the Twelfth day of July in the same year, as well in the County of Bergen in the State of New Jersey aforesaid as also at the Eighth Ward of the City of New York in the County of New York aforesaid, did languish and languishing did live, on which twelfth day of July in the said year the said Alexander Hamilton at the said Eighth Ward of the said City in the said County of New York of the mortal wound aforesaid, died and the jurors aforesaid on their oath aforesaid do further say that William P. Van Ness, late of the first Ward of the City of New York, in the County of New York, aforesaid, Attorney at Law and Nathaniel Pendleton late of the same place Counsellor at Law, at the time of committing the felony and murder aforesaid, feloniously, wilfully and of their malice aforethought, were present abetting, aiding, assisting, comforting and maintaining the said Aaron Burr to kill and murder the said Alexander Hamilton in the manner aforesaid, and so the Jurors aforesaid upon their oath aforesaid do say the said Aaron Burr and the said William P. Van Ness and Nathaniel Pendleton, him the said Alexander Hamilton in manner and by the means aforesaid feloniously, wilfully and of their malice aforethought did kill and murder against the peace of the People of the State of New York and their dignity.

In Witness whereof as well the aforesaid Coroner, as the Jurors aforesaid, have to this Inquisition put their seals on the second day of August and in the year one thousand eight hundred and four, and at the place aforesaid.

JOHN BURGER, Coroner [L. S.]

ALEXR. ANDERSON,	DAVID A. BROWER,
GEORGE MINUSE,	DAVID LYDIG,
JOHN A. HARDENBROOK,	ABM. BLOODGOOD,
PETER BONNETT,	JAMES CUMMING.
ELAM WILLIAMS,	AMOS CURTIS,
JOHN COFFIN,	ISAAC BURR,
JOHN MILDEBERGER,	BENJ. STRONG,
JOHN D. MILLER.	

The feeling of indignation aroused against Burr was universal. As the facts upon which the duel had been pro-

voked became known, the most intense excitement pervaded the public mind. It was said he had practiced with a pistol at mark for months before the challenge, and had worn a covering of silk when in the field as a sort of armour, for the protection of his person. It became known that Hamilton had not intended to fire at Burr. His private memoranda made the day before, and the statement of his second and his own solemn declarations within one hour of his death, established this fact beyond question. He went upon the field like a victim resigned to his slaughter, without the fell spirit or intent which animated his ruthless and relentless pursuer. The pervading grief of the public mind became intense. Suffice it to say, every political animosity appeared to have been buried in his tomb. The voice of reproach for any opinions he may have held was hushed forever, and the eye that did not weep, and the countenance that did not reflect the solemn aspect of the gloomy pall which enshrouded his remains, were regarded as those of the followers of the dark conspirators who had perpetrated this great wrong upon the country. Nor was this gloomy sentiment confined to this country, it extended throughout Europe; the statesmen and great men of the old world participating in the grief which pervaded the whole continent of America.

Burr became a wanderer and an outcast.—It is said when he called on Prince Tallyrand then in the zenith of his power, and sent his name to that minister, the latter sent him word, that he would be happy to see a man, who had occupied the position of Vice President of the United States, but that he desired to let Col. Burr know, that *the miniature of Alexander Hamilton was always to be found suspended over his mantlepiece.*

And now in drawing to a close this feeble but sincere tribute to the memory of Hamilton, let me say that I do not wish to be understood as endorsing every public act he performed, or every opinion he may

have advanced. He held opinions in regard to a National Bank, the tenure of office, and other measures of governmental policy to which I never can subscribe. He may have entertained views not strictly in keeping with the generally conceived notions of our day, but these were but spots upon the sun, not to be observed amidst the surrounding splendor of his glorious character and services. Let us do him Justice! and secure his memory from the common error I fear too generally existing in the superficial public mind, that he was a monarchist in principle and an aristocrat in feeling. Such was not Alexander Hamilton; and to attribute sentiments to him hostile to Republican Institutions, for which he had suffered and accomplished so much, is to unjustly darken the bright name of one of the master-spirits of the Revolution. It is to cast a reproach upon the principles and loyalty of Washington himself, "who knew him best and loved him most."

Well may Virginia watch over the ashes of Washington, now lying entombed at Mount Vernon; so will New York guard the ashes of Hamilton, reposing in Trinity Church yard. Though separated in the tomb, their fame is the common property of the country. May the recollection of their deeds endure as long as time, and their names go forth into the dark and shadowy future associated together in history, as they were in the service of their country.

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